



DISNEY'S PLANET CHALLENGE THE STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Getting started on your DPC project is easy! Follow the steps below to find out how.

STEP ONE: Register to Enroll

The first step is to enroll your classroom into the DPC competition. If you have not yet enrolled, please visit dpcproject.com to get started with our online registration.

Not yet ready to enroll? To learn more about the program before registering, visit our website at www.disney.com/planetchallenge. If you have any questions, you may also contact the Disney Planet Challenge team at disneyplanetchallenge@gmail.com or by phone at 1 (877) 235-1399.

STEP TWO: Choose Your Portfolio Type

NOTE: If your team is an elementary school classroom (grades 3-5), then continue with step 2. If your team is a middle school classroom (grades 6-8), then you must submit a digital portfolio; middle school teams please skip to step 3.

As an elementary school classroom there are two types of portfolios that can be submitted. You can either submit a hard copy portfolio or a digital portfolio that you create using our online portfolio builder tool.

- 1) Determine which method is right for you and your classroom based on your preferences and technological access. Both the digital and hard copy portfolios will be evaluated equally.
- 2) Don't worry! If you change your mind about which type of portfolio you would like to pursue, you can always log in to your user account and change your preference.
- 3) For more on the Portfolio see Step Eight below.



STEP THREE: Project Preparation

Before embarking on this journey with your students, it is helpful to review a few core documents that provide tips and guidelines for conducting your project and integrating state content standards.

- 1) **LESSON PLANS:** Visit the [project resources section](#) and download sample lesson plans aligned to the specific standards of your state and classroom grade level. These lesson plans provide an example of approaching the DPC project from start to finish within your particular state guidelines. To ensure educational excellence, all lesson plans have been developed in collaboration with the WestEd/K-12 Alliance. Links to your state standards can also be found in this section of the site.
- 2) **CLASS HANDBOOK:** Download the Class Handbook for your competition track found in the downloadable forms and guidelines also on the [project resources page](#). This handbook contains student and teacher pages that can help you to plan and implement your DPC project, including explanations of student and teacher roles, teacher guides, student handouts, timelines and checklists.
- 3) **PROJECT TIMELINE:** On the same [project resources page](#), you should also download the Project Timeline. This timeline is a suggestion that lays out the timing for all stages of the project based upon a four-month schedule. Actual timelines can vary averaging between two and five months.
- 4) **MAKE A PLAN:** Review and use the sample lesson plans, DPC Class Handbook, and Project Timeline, to develop your own schedule for implementing your DPC project. Bear in mind, however, that your final lesson plan will need to factor in for the student chosen topic. For info on choosing that topic proceed to Step Four.
- 5) **FUNDING:** When planning your DPC project, be aware that you can seek outside funding. One great opportunity that is available is Donors Choose. You can submit your project idea to donorschoose.org/teachers. Once approved donors from across the country can view your idea submission and donate funds to the project. If a qualifying DPC project idea is submitted with a cost of \$1,000 or under to Donors Choose and enrolled in Disney's Planet Challenge, once half the project is funded, Disney will cover the rest. This promotion continues until the funding runs out, and funding is on a first come, first served basis, so apply early. Funding begins in September. Beyond Donors Choose, many teachers seek project grants, which can be a great way to bring your classroom project alive. Just remember there are many ways that you can fund your project, so explore your options.

STEP FOUR: Get Started – Choosing a Topic

With your class you will select ONE real-world and local environmental issue - from animal habitat restoration and protection to climate change - and discuss the change you want to see and help create in your community. Before selecting that one issue, however, the students will brainstorm topics narrowing the choices.



- 1) **BRAINSTORMING:** Begin by facilitating a brainstorming session with your students. Keep in mind that the goal is to provide students with the opportunity to:
 - I. Identify and focus on one environmental issue in their local area, learn about and investigate ways to address this issue, and develop and take action to improve the environment.
 - II. Learn appropriate Content Standards in an authentic and engaging manner.

Suggestions on brainstorming:

- I. **INTRO TO ENVIRONMENT:** Introduce the students to environmental topics by:
 - A. Discussing ways students are already living in an eco-friendly way to protect their community and world.
 - B. Using inspirational stories about everyday people making a difference, or classic motivational stories like Molly Bang's "Common Ground" or Loren Eiseley's "Starfish Story".
 - II. **PROBLEM/ISSUE WEB:** Have the students create nature journals to create a web of problems students feel they would like to resolve in their community, or issues they would like to further research. All ideas are good ideas and should be included on the web.
 - III. **THEME:** Develop a theme from the web. The theme can be built off of the science standards – plants, water cycle, ecology, local habitats. This should help narrow your topic choices.
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- 2) **FINAL PROJECT SELECTION:** After brainstorming, you will need to help your students to make their final project selection and to refine their project idea. You can do this both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Based on these lessons students should further narrow their topic choice until making their final decision on the DPC project. Remember the final idea should be more than a short-term project, but something with long-term potential. Some suggestions for helping students with their decision include:
 - A. **BACKGROUND LESSONS:** Teaching background science lessons for chosen topics based on appropriate content standards.
 - B. **DISCUSSIONS:** Discussing resources and ideas the children have for addressing identified problems.
 - C. **NATURE VISITS:** Using the science standards for your state and grade level as a guide, taking the children into nature – a park or greenbelt near the school, a large tree in the neighborhood, an open city space, a local nature center, or a habitat restoration facility.



STEP FIVE: Get your Students involved in Hands-on Learning (Project Planning and Research)

Once your students have chosen a project idea, provide them with hands-on experiences that lead to research and a solution to the environmental project the class has chosen. Examples include:

- A) **NATURE JOURNALS:** Taking students outside with notebooks or nature journals so they can experience and reflect on nature first hand.
- B) **SITE VISITS:** Visit the class' chosen project site as much as possible.
- C) **REFLECTIONS:** Having students reflect on their feelings and experiences. Use the writing standards to develop related writing assignments.
- D) **STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS:** Have students contact and communicate with possible resources through writing, phone conversations, and personal interactions.
- E) **GUEST SPEAKERS:** Inviting guest speakers to the classroom. Arrange for experts working in fields related to the class project to guide students in studying and/or working on their project. Speakers and guides can be found in universities, museums, and nature centers. Local experts such as university professors, retired naturalists/scientists, and local naturalists from non-profit organizations and nearby nature areas are also amazing resources.
- F) **AVAILABLE SUPPORT:** Consider utilizing our Disney's Planet Challenge [Mentorship Opportunities](#). The UL Class Champions program connects your classroom with a professional UL scientist willing to help with your project. In addition, our [Community Center](#) can prove a useful tool, providing you with access to our social media presences and connecting you with other Disney's Planet Challenge teachers.

STEP SIX: Putting the Plan to Action

After a topic has been chosen, planned and researched, it is time for students to enact the project itself. Students will work hands-on to create a difference in their communities by acting on their local environmental issue. While working on the project here are a few things to remember.

- A) **STUDENT-CHOSEN:** Make sure the project is student-chosen.
- B) **STUDENT-CREATED:** The students should create everything, from letters, phone conversations, to presentations.
- C) **TEACHER MONITORED:** The teacher should monitor the students' work, set up field experiences, and follow-up on student communication.
- D) **TEAMS:** Although the main idea is developed as a whole class, it often helps to put students into teams that will focus on different aspects of the project.



- E) **HANDS-ON:** The students' experiences should be hands-on when they are in the field and in the classroom.

NOTE: Steps six and the following step seven occur simultaneously. Once work on a project has begun, sharing student work and progress with the community can be a great way to increase awareness and gain additional support in putting your plan into action.

STEP SEVEN: Engage Family and Community

Family and community involvement is key to a successful project. Find ways to share the students' work and learning with as many people as possible. Allow others to contribute their knowledge and skills to making your class project a success. For instance:

- A) **SCHOOL:** School-wide presentations, videos, and plays, can allow students to share their project with the community. The class can host its own school-wide fair, informational evening, or other special event or students could present during pre-scheduled school-wide events such as science fairs and family nights. The goal should be to teach others in the school's community about the students' work while encouraging additional community-members to get involved (e.g. parents, other classes, PTA)
- B) **MEDIA:** Local media is a great way to let others know about the positive changes students are making in the community. Through grants or with personal equipment, students can create documentaries about their work. These can be shared with local television stations and/or shown by the students. Students are encouraged to create additional awareness of the project by writing letters or emails to local television stations and publications about their work.
- C) **GOVERNMENT:** Letters about the project from students to local, state, and federal politicians may provide new perspectives and resources.
- D) **FAMILY:** Input from family members on videos, photos, writing, artistic pieces and music etc. can be invaluable.

STEP EIGHT: Create a Final Product for the Judges

Throughout the project, all work should be documented and saved. Pictures, videos, letters written to and by the students, student research and writing are all ways of demonstrating how the class has learned about the project and worked toward a solution. This documentation will become the foundation and art of the class portfolio, which shall be evaluated on a nationwide and statewide basis.

Projects are evaluated against the following criteria:

- A) Environmental relevance
- B) Student learning
- C) Community involvement
- D) Changes in practices and attitudes
- E) Lasting benefits to students, school and /or community



- F) Sustainability
- G) Originality

When creating the portfolio here are a few key points to remember:

- A) **SPECIFICATIONS:** If submitting a paper portfolio, it must use paper no larger than 11x17. Digital portfolios must be created with the Disney Planet Challenge portfolio builder tool and must be submitted online through our website. All portfolios should contain no more than 16 pages (8 pages front and back or 16 single-sided pages) of text, photos, drawings, etc.
- B) **THE SCORING RUBRIC:** Review the DPC scoring rubric with the students in order to gain a better understanding of what the judges will be looking for in each project. [Elementary School Rubric](#) | [Middle School Rubric](#)
- C) **THE THEME:** Remind your students that every page should connect to the theme of the project. For example, if the class project revolves around protecting the local watershed, then the pages on public speakers, grants, field work, etc. should reference how these experiences and events helped the students learn about and protect the watershed.
- D) **SMALL GROUPS:** It can be helpful to split students into small groups that can each focus on 1-2 pages of the portfolio. Each page can focus on a different aspect of the project, but when put together into a scrapbook, they should create a story of the journey from the beginning (generating ideas) to the end (how the project goal was or will be completed).
- E) **BUILT BY STUDENTS:** The class project portfolio should be designed, created, and written by students, with only guidance from the teacher, and should fully reflect the students' creative talents and understanding of the project. Originality and creativity is highly encouraged!
- F) **CONTENT STANDARDS:** Although the portfolio is driven by the students, it is important that the teacher demonstrate ways in which content standards were met and student learning was achieved when working on the project.
- G) **STUDENT REFLECTIONS:** Every child should complete the Student Reflection Page. This page will help the children clarify their thoughts and can be used in creating the assigned scrapbook pages. Up to (10) ten samples of these reflections should be included with the final portfolio. They do not count as portfolio pages.
- H) **TEACHER REFLECTION:** Once all the pages are assembled, the teacher can review them in order to evaluate how the students have grown and what they were able to accomplish. Using the student-created scrapbook, personal observations, and the questions from the Teacher Reflection Page, the teacher should write 1-2 pages reflecting on the completed Disney Planet Challenge project.



- I) **COVER SHEETS:** Lastly, both pages of the cover sheet should be completed and included with the portfolio.
- J) **THE CHECKLIST:** Before mailing (or digitally submitting) the portfolio, reflections, and cover sheets, take time to compare the completed work with the Portfolio Checklist (found in the Downloadable Forms and Guidelines section of [Project Resources](#)) and the DPC Scoring Rubric ([Elementary School Rubric](#) | [Middle School Rubric](#)).
- K) **FORMS:** Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection, Cover Sheet, and Portfolio Checklist forms can all be found within the Downloadable Forms and Guidelines section of [Project Resources page](#). Digital portfolios, however, should utilize the online forms found under teacher tools after logging in to [dpcproject.com](#).
- L) **YOUR COPY:** If you would like to have a copy of your class portfolio, you will need to make copies of student work or have the students make two of every page they create. Disney's Planet Challenge will hold on to your original portfolio that you send in for the competition. Digital submissions can be printed from the online portfolio builder tool or saved as a PDF.
- M) **SAMPLES:** It may help to review [past winning portfolios](#).

STEP NINE: Submitting your Portfolio

Once you've finished your portfolio, depending on what type of portfolio you created, there are two routes towards submission.

- A) **HARD COPY PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION:** Send your hard copy portfolio and all required documentation (the cover sheet, teacher reflection, and 5-10 student reflections) to the following address:

Disney's Planet Challenge
C/O Corporate Citizenship Signature Programs
The Walt Disney Company
500 South Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521-6445

Upon the receipt of your portfolio with the Disney's Planet Challenge team, you shall receive an email confirming its receipt and providing you with a submission ID number, if one has not already been assigned (see optional steps below).

NOTE: Please be certain to make copies of your portfolio for your own records. Portfolio submissions are kept by Disney's Planet Challenge and are not returned to their sender.



OPTIONAL STEPS:

Let us know: If you would like the DPC team to know to expect your portfolio submission, you can utilize the submit a portfolio section on the [Teachers Tools page](#). This step is completely optional for hard copy submissions. By using this button you will immediately receive a submission ID number, which will be sent to Disney's Planet Challenge.

- 1) **The Submission Checklist:** Fill out the submission checklist in the submit a portfolio section. Check off each item as you proof it and pack it for shipping.
- 2) **Click Submit:** Once you have proofed and packed each element and toggled the 5 checkboxes, the submit portfolio button will be active for use. Click the button and follow the associated prompts.
- 3) **Confirm your submission:** After you confirm your submission you will be assigned a submission ID number (which will be emailed to you) and our team will know to expect your portfolio.
- 4) **Mail your submission:** Don't forget to mail your portfolio and all required documents. They must be postmarked by our submission deadline of 2/15/12.

B) DIGITAL PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION:

- 1) **Before Submission:** Before submitting your portfolio, please be sure to print each page of your portfolio or save a PDF version for your records.
- 2) **The Submission Checklist:** On the [Teachers Tools page](#), you will find a submit a portfolio section, with a submit portfolio button grayed out. Until you complete the associated submission checklist you will be unable to submit your portfolio. The checklist reads as follows:
 - Up-to-date portfolio
 - Min. 5 Student Reflections
 - Cover Sheet
 - Teacher Reflection
 - Portfolio (max) 16 pages

As you complete each section using the online tools on the Teachers Tools page, toggle the checkbox beside that feature. Once you have toggled all five boxes, the Submit Portfolio button will become active.



3) **Submit Portfolio:** Click the submit portfolio button.

3a - You will be asked to verify which type of portfolio you are submitting or be given the option to cancel out of the submission process at that time.

3b1 – If you choose a portfolio type that does not match your profile you will be prompted to edit your profile. Click the Edit Profile button and modify your profile to reflect your intended portfolio submission type. You will then need to begin the submission process, again.

3b2 – After selecting your portfolio type you are sent to the submission confirmation window. By clicking submit you will lock your portfolio, profile information, cover sheet and reflections, and you will be unable to update this information beyond this point. You can cancel out of the submission process rather than clicking submit if you still need to make changes to your portfolio or supporting documents.

3c – Once you click submit on the submission confirmation window, you will receive an email with your submission ID number. Your portfolio, cover sheet, and reflections have now been submitted.

STEP TEN: Keep on Working

Remember, the completed portfolio does not mean the class work has ended. When given the opportunity to focus on a cause that is meaningful to them, students can be a powerful force and will prove eager to learn more. Keep up the good work and continue to create positive change in the school and local community.